

PRESS RELEASE

THE NATIONAL SUICIDE RESEARCH FOUNDATION SUPPORTS THE ENACTMENT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH ALCOHOL BILL

Alcohol is one of the most important risk factors associated with self-harm acts and deaths by suicide. Among people who die by suicide in Ireland, the proportion of those dependent on alcohol ranges from 51% to 85%. Based on the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland (NSHRI) data, alcohol is involved in one third of all self-harm presentations to hospital Emergency Departments (31%).

One in every three self-harm presentations to hospital Emergency Departments in Ireland involves alcohol, with 34% of men and 29% of women presenting with alcohol related self-harm. Alcohol related self-harm is also prevalent among Irish adolescents. It has been estimated that 17% of adolescent self-harm was attributed to heavy drinking.

Alcohol contributes to increasing rates of self-harm and is involved in peaks at specific times in the year. These peaks would not exist if alcohol would not be involved. Over the past decade, the NSHRI has identified that the highest number of self-harm presentations to hospital occurred on bank holidays and the day after, in particular St Patrick's Day and New Year's Day. Alcohol was involved in 46% of all self-harm presentations on bank holidays compared to 39% on all other days. In particular, the Christmas period was associated with the highest risk of alcohol being involved in self-harm.

Alcohol involvement in self-harm poses challenges for the management and assessment of self-harm patients in Emergency Departments. Co-morbidity and dual diagnosis add complexity, and alcohol intoxication may lead to delayed assessment following a self-harm act as well as challenges in encouraging people to engage in treatment.

An overview of systematic reviews of population-level interventions to reduce alcohol-related harm concluded that there is a pattern of support for regulatory or statutory enforcement interventions. A review reported in 2016 that the literature on alcohol policies and suicide in general supported the protective effect of restrictive alcohol policies on reducing suicide.

The Public Health Alcohol Bill will contribute to reducing suicide and self-harm in Ireland, and will complement priority actions of *Connecting for Life*, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide, 2015-2020. The Bill sets out measures that are long overdue: minimum unit pricing, strict separation of alcohol products in outlets, compulsory health-labelling on alcohol containers, restrictions on advertising and promotions and its goal is to reduce average annual consumption from 11 to 9.1 litres per person by 2020.

Implementing the Public Health Alcohol Bill will contribute to saving many lives in Ireland.

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2016 statistics at a glance

Presentations
11,485

Persons
8,909

1 in every 3
involved **alcohol**



Men



Women

The seasonal relationship between self-harm and alcohol



Self-Harm

01 JANUARY

The highest number of self-harm presentations occur on **New Year's Day**



Average number of presentations **56**

Alcohol

JAN
JUL

FEB
AUG

MAR
SEP

APR
OCT

MAY
NOV

JUN
DEC

Self-harm presentations involving alcohol are highest at **Christmas**

Presentations involving **alcohol 3 times more likely** at Christmas



The National Self-Harm Registry Ireland Annual report 2016 and 'The paradox of public holidays: Hospital-treated self-harm and associated factors' are available on www.nsrf.ie